

Running head: APPLICANTS' ONLINE SELF-PRESENTATION DURING RECRUITMENT

Applicants' Self-Presentation Intentions and Tactics on Personal Network Sites during
Recruitment, Moderated by Core Self-Evaluations

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to extend the existing theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the way applicants adjust to the new trend of hiring managers increasingly using personal network sites to vet applicants. Initially participants' perception of fairness in relation to their intention to resort to self-presentation has been examined. Second their self-presentation strategies, using image creation and protection tactics available on Facebook, were studied in a fictional recruitment setting. Furthermore, as earlier research indicates people do not necessarily react consistently under similar circumstances, the personality construct of core self-evaluations (CSE) was taken into account as a possible moderator. Finally, age, gender and familiarity with the new trend were controlled for as earlier research indicates they could affect the relationship between the main variables.

This study has a correlational and experimental design for which the data was collected through use of a survey. The data collection was done only once at a single point in time during the study. The full dataset was used for both parts of the study. The research group consisted of 240 women and men from the Netherlands ranging from 17 to 65 years old. The survey results did not support the assumption that fairness heightens the intention to apply online self-presentation, although, while not hypothesised, it did influence the application of image creation tactics. Participants were not more inclined to apply image creation than image protection tactics. Also no support was found that applicants use different strategies with regard to job requirements that were related more to extraversion or more to conscientiousness. Participants' intentions to resort to self-presentation did influence the employment of image creation tactics and predicted the employment of image protection tactics in the extraversion condition. Furthermore, the personality construct of CSE was not found to moderate participants' impression management, although a low level of CSE correlated with self-presentation intentions and applied image protection tactics among

women. Finally, a lack of familiarity with the trend corresponded to feelings of unfairness and the intention to apply self-presentation.

In sum, perceived unfairness can stimulate candidates to embellish their virtual persona, though, the act of protecting one's image seems to be less related to feelings of being unfairly treated. When looking at the averages of participants' scores on self-presentation intentions and their level of agreement with applying self-presentation tactics, the motivation to change their online image seems more moderate compared to employment selection tests. Furthermore, both dispositional and situational factors may come into play regarding the decision-making process to alter an online profile. A low level of CSE corresponded to an increase in self-presentation intentions and behaviour with respect to women. Though not significant, situational factors like knowledge of different job requirements could change the extent of the application of self-presentation. Finally, once applicants are familiar with the new vetting trend they may be less inclined to alter their online image.

Keywords: recruitment; social networking sites; fairness; self-presentation; core self-evaluation; image creation tactics; image protection tactics.